



News Release

Office of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal
5150 Florida Boulevard
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

Visit our website: "www.dps.state.la.us/sfm/

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE NUMBER: 0102-011207-22
DATE: December 07, 2001

CONTACT: MARC REECH
504-925-4911
1-800-256-5452

STATE FIRE MARSHAL CAUTIONS CITIZENS THAT DECEMBER IS PEAK MONTH FOR HOME CANDLE FIRES

Baton Rouge, LA – The Office of the State Fire Marshal is reminding citizens to exercise extra caution when using candles, and particularly during holiday and seasonal celebrations.

State fire Marshal V. J. Bella advised that national statistics from the National Fire Protection Association reveal an alarming upward trend in home candle fires in the United States since 1991. In 1997 there were 11,600 home candle fires in the U.S. There are twice as many home candle fires in December as in an average month (based on a statistical monthly average).

In NFPA's study, over one-third (36%) of home candle fires started when the candle was unattended, abandoned or inadequately controlled. Almost one-fifth (18%) of home candle fires occurred because the candle was too close to combustible materials, and 9% of home candle fires were started by children playing with the candles.

While almost half (44%) of all candle fires start in the bedroom, the usage of candles for holiday decorating alters this pattern during December, with a higher number of home candle fires starting in the family room or dining room. In December, 29% of home candle fires begin in the family room or den (compared to 17% during the rest of the year). Fifteen percent (15%) of the December home candle fires began when decorations were ignited, compared to only 3% during the rest of the year.

"Candles help us create a spirit of warmth during the holiday season, and they add atmosphere to our celebrations, but safety should always be a priority," said Fire Marshal Bella. "The NFPA has learned from a special study that teenagers are at a high risk of candle fires, and parents should be aware of this. It is safest not to allow any unsupervised use of candles by teen and young children," added Mr. Bella.

The Fire Marshal's Office offers the following tips for safe use of candles during the holidays:

- ? **Use candles only with constant adult supervision;**
- ? **Extinguish all candles when leaving a room or going to sleep;**
- ? **Keep candles well away from items that can catch fire, such as Christmas trees, flammable decorations, clothing, books, paper, curtains, etc.;**

MORE MORE MORE

- ? **Make sure candles are placed on a secure piece of furniture, in sturdy holders that will not tip over. Make sure candle holders are non-combustible and big enough to collect dripping wax;**
- ? **Do not place lit candles in windows, where blinds or curtains can close over them;**
- ? **Keep wicks trimmed to ¼", and extinguish candles when they burn down to within two inches (2") of the holder;**
- ? **Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids;**
- ? **Do not use candles in places where they can be knocked over by children or pets.**

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is committed to Public Safety Education, Fire Code Development, Fire Code Enforcement, and Service to the Public. For more information, visit our website at www.dps.state.la.us/sfm/ or contact us at 1-800-256-5452.